

WEEK 4: SERVICE RESOURCES

THEME: JESUS WASHES PETER'S FEET

MAIN READING: John 13.31-35

When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

SECOND READING (if required) REVELATION 21.1-6

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true. He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The grace and the peace of the risen Lord be with you.

And also with you.

I was glad when they said to me: Let us go into the House of the Lord!

And so here we are! Families together! Young and old alike!

Here we are celebrating that God is our true Parent and Jesus our true brother!

Let us worship the Lord today in gladness and in song!

COLLECT

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen

INTERCESSIONS

1. The Church and its Ministry

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for the gift of the Church, the body of Christ, called to be your hands and feet in this world. Just as Jesus humbly washed the feet of his disciples, teach us to serve one another with love and humility. Strengthen our leaders, clergy, and all who minister in your name. May they be empowered by your Spirit to lead with grace, wisdom, and compassion. Help us all to live out our calling to serve others, shining your light in every corner of our world.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

2. The World

Lord of all creation, we lift up to you our troubled world. Where there is conflict, bring peace; where there is oppression, bring justice; where there is suffering, bring relief. As Jesus knelt in service to his disciples, may the nations of the world learn to serve each other with humility and respect. We pray for leaders and decision-makers, that they may be guided by your principles of justice and compassion. Help us to be good stewards of your creation, caring for the earth and all its inhabitants.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

3. Our Local Community

Gracious God, we bring before you our local community, the place where we live and work. Help us to follow Jesus' example of loving service in our interactions with our neighbors. Bless our schools, workplaces, and local organizations. May we be a source of support and encouragement to those around us. Teach us to see each person as a beloved child of God, deserving of dignity and respect. May our community be a place where your love is evident in our actions and attitudes.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

4. The Church's Mission to the Needy

Compassionate Father, we pray for those who are in need, both near and far. As Jesus served his disciples, may we serve those who are hungry, homeless, or in distress. Help us to be agents of your mercy and kindness, reaching out with practical help and loving care. Bless the work of charities, missions, and all who labor to alleviate suffering. Grant us generous hearts to share our resources and time with those in need.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

5. Those in need

Healing God, we lift up to you those who are sick, struggling, or in any kind of need. May your healing presence be with them, bringing comfort and strength. We pray for those who care for the sick, that they may be filled with your compassion and wisdom. Just as Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, may we tenderly care for those who are hurting. Surround them with your love and peace, and grant them the hope of your unfailing presence.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

Leader: Lord Jesus, on the night you were betrayed, you knelt down and washed your disciples' feet.

All: Teach us to follow your example of humble service.

Leader: You showed us that true greatness is found in serving others with love.

All: Help us to serve one another with kindness and compassion.

Leader: As you washed the feet of your disciples, cleanse our hearts and minds.

All: Make us more like you, Lord, in our words and actions.

Leader: Empower us to be your hands and feet in this world.

All: Guide us to serve with humility and grace.

Leader: Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer. Amen.

BLESSING

Go in peace, love, and care for one another in the name of Christ Jesus. Remember, life is short, so let's make it joyful for those who journey with us. Be quick to love and eager to be kind.

May the blessing of God—the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer—be with you now and always. **Amen.**

WEEK 4: HYMNS AND SONGS

- STF 18 Be still and know that I am God
- STF 30 Jesus stand among us
- STF 242 A new commandment I give unto you
- STF 249 Jesu, jesu, fill us with your love
- STF 258 You are the Vine, we are the branches
- STF 690 The Church's one foundation
- STF 783 Ubi caritas (Where charity and love is)

1. If we claim to love our neighbour
while the hungry queue for food,
are we prey to self deception?
Is perception quite so crude?
If we sit beside our neighbours,
begging for the things they need,
we might share their own injustice
in a world that thrives on greed.

2. If we punish those with nothing,
blaming them for where they stand,
is this love of friend or neighbour,
do we still not understand?
Love of neighbour is not easy,
cuts us till we feel the pain,
sharing hurt that they are feeling
till they find new life again.

3. Love of neighbour sets us squarely
in the place where they now sit,
till the richness God has given
builds a pearl around the grit;
till each person shares the comfort
of the love of which we preach,
till we live as fact the Gospel:
none can be beyond love's reach.

Tune: 8,7,8,7 D
Suggested tunes: Bethany (StF 25);
Scarlet Ribbons (StF 131)

Words: Andrew Pratt (born 1948) © 2015 Stainer &
Bell Ltd, London, England, www.stainer.co.uk.
Please include any reproduction for local church use
on your CCL Licence returns.

WEEK 4: REFLECTION

Today, let's consider a few verses from John 13 that carry a weight far beyond their simplicity.

In verse 34, Jesus says, *"I give you a new commandment, love one another."*

At first glance, this seems somewhat redundant. Hasn't Jesus been conveying this all along? His parables, his compassion for the marginalised, his healing touch—all resonate with the same theme: love.

So why label it a *new* commandment? And why frame it as a command?

This shift is subtle yet seismic. Until now, love has been demonstrated, encouraged, and woven into every aspect of Jesus' ministry

However, here, Jesus crystallises it: loving one another isn't merely a suggestion or an inspiring idea to contemplate; it's a command.

This alters everything.

The Weight of the Moment

Consider the setting.

Judas has just left the room, and the wheels of betrayal are already in motion. Jesus knows his time is short. This isn't a casual dinner conversation; it's his last opportunity to leave an indelible mark on his disciples' hearts.

Picture that room: softly illuminated, with traces of the Passover meal left behind, as a circle of friends wrestles with confusion and dread.

Jesus, keenly conscious of the impending turmoil, delivers a message that encapsulates the core of his life and teachings in a single, profound command.

Love one another.

A New Testament scholar once said, *"This new command is simple enough for a toddler to memorise and profound enough to challenge the most mature believers."*

That hits home, doesn't it? How often do we, seasoned in our faith, stumble over this very thing?

A Mirror to Our Hearts

When I read these words, I find myself pausing to ask: Am I truly living this out? Do my words and actions genuinely reflect this command? At times, the answer is rather uncomfortable.

Fear, anxiety, and the need for control can lead us to withdraw inwardly. We concentrate on our requirements, our comfort, and our security.

At other times, frustration bubbles over, causing sharp words to spill out. It's not merely a personal struggle; it's a community issue as well. Churches can easily fall into this trap, circling the wagons when confronted with challenges, focusing inwards rather than outwards.

But that's not the Jesus way.

Jesus didn't say, *"They will recognise that you are my disciples by your theology, your church attendance, or your moral checklist."* He said, *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you **have love for one another.**"* (John 13:35)

It's not about perfection; it's about authenticity. When we love—genuinely, sacrificially, and consistently—it stands out. It defies expectations. It's the kind of love that transcends boundaries, breaks down walls, and speaks louder than any sermon.

When Love Feels Hard

Let's be honest: loving others isn't always easy. It's not merely about warm feelings or kind gestures.

At times, love manifests as patience when you're frustrated, forgiveness when you've been hurt, or compassion when you'd prefer to turn away.

I think of times when I've fallen short—holding back a kind word, missing an opportunity to help, speaking out of anger rather than grace.

But the goal isn't to wallow in guilt. The goal is to recalibrate, to return to that simple, profound command: Love one another as I have loved you.

I'm reminded of a trip to London, where we saw *The Phantom of the Opera*. There is a song titled *"All I Ask of You,"* a haunting duet in which the characters plead, *"Love me, that's all I ask of you."*

Isn't that the essence of Jesus' command?

He says to love me and to love one another in the same manner. It's both an invitation and a mandate.

Not out of obligation, but from the abundance of the love we have received from him.

The Daily Challenge

So, how are we doing with this?

Not just in grand gestures but in everyday moments:

- The way we speak to our family when we're tired.
- The patience we show in traffic or long lines.
- The grace we extend when someone disappoints us.
- The courage to reach out when someone feels forgotten.

Love is not merely a feeling; it is a practice. It resides in the small choices that accumulate into a life that mirrors Jesus.

Jesus' words in John 13 are not merely ancient instructions; they are a living call. In a world characterised by division, fear, and self-interest, loving one another is radical. It is the mark of a true disciple.

So, today, let us ask ourselves: How am I loving? Not perfectly, but with intention. Because in the end, that's how the world will know whom we follow.

*Jesus, You gave us a new commandment:
to love one another as You have loved us.
Teach us to love with open hearts and willing hands.*

*When fear and anxiety make us retreat inward,
Draw us out of ourselves to see the needs of others.*

*When frustration and anger rise within us,
Fill us with patience, grace, and gentle words.*

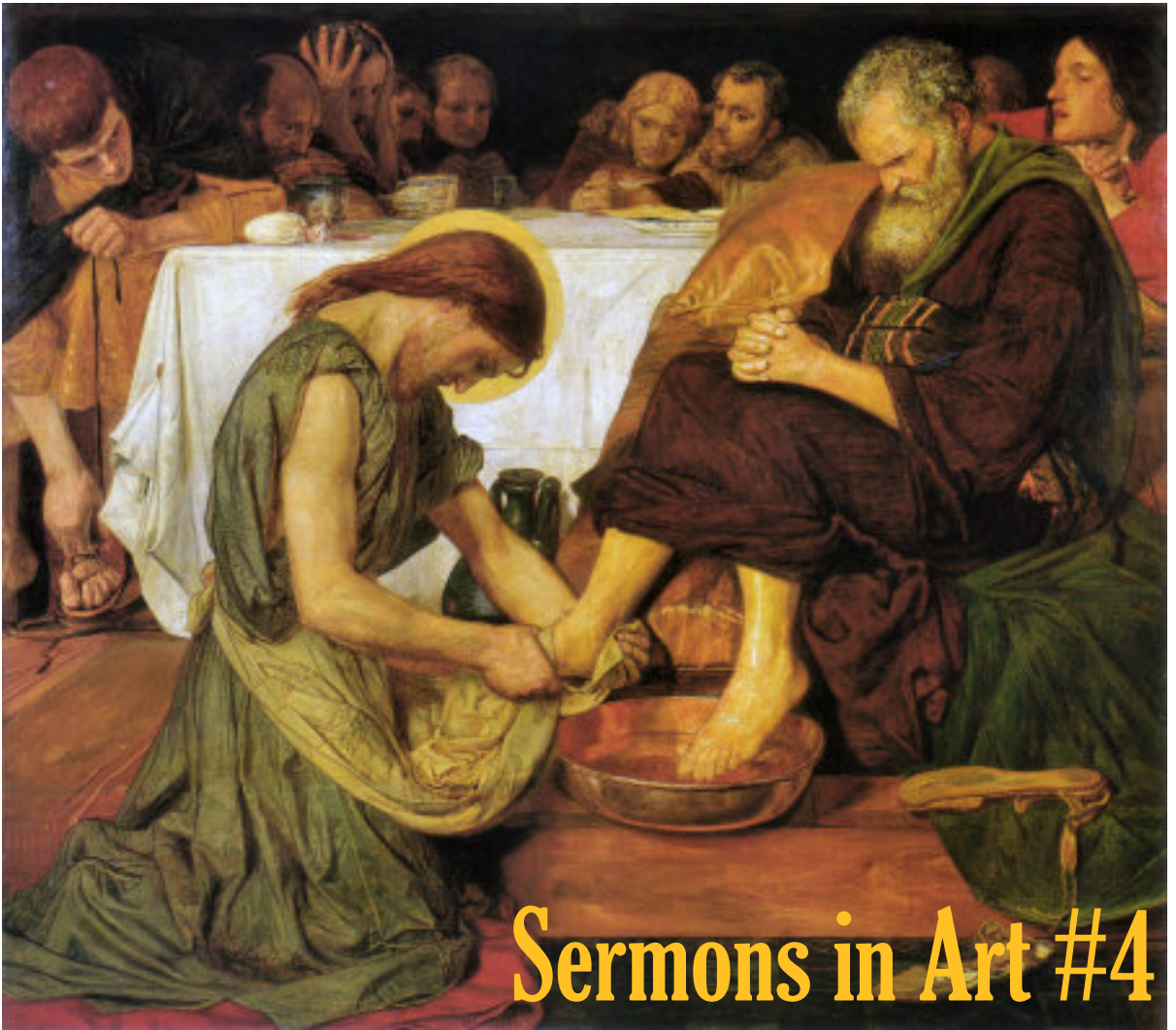
*When we are tempted to choose comfort over compassion,
grant us the courage to reach beyond our circles and love boldly.*

*For the times we've missed opportunities to show kindness,
Forgive us, Lord, and renew our hearts to try again.*

*Your love crosses boundaries, breaks down walls,
and speaks louder than words.
Let my life reflect that same love so the world may know we are Your disciples.*

*Not through grand gestures alone, but in small, daily choices—
May we love as You have loved us.*

*Jesus, You ask only this: Love Me and love one another.
Help us live this command with joy, sincerity, and faithfulness.
Amen.*



Sermons in Art #4

Ford Madox Brown, Jesus washes Peter's Feet

Scandal!/ Outrage! The Messiah, the One everyone believed would usher in a new kingdom, restore Israel, and vanquish God's enemies, is kneeling to wash His followers' feet.

This is the same Jesus whom the disciples sacrificed everything to follow—the One they witnessed walking on water, casting out demons, healing lepers, and feeding thousands with just a few loaves and fish.

Now, He is undertaking the work of a servant. No wonder they appear confused and even horrified in this painting! Yet Jesus? He remains entirely calm, focused, and at peace with what He is doing.

It's the night of the Last Supper. Jesus did something unexpected.

He got up from the table, removed his outer robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, poured water into a basin, and started washing his disciples' feet.

When he reached Simon Peter, Peter was shocked and asked, "*Lord, are you really going to wash my feet?*" Jesus replied, "*You don't understand now, but you will later.*"

Peter, still resistant, exclaimed, "*Never! You're not washing my feet.*" But Jesus gently replied, "*If I don't wash you, you won't have any part with me.*" That quickly changed Peter's mind: "*In that case, Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and head!*" Jesus reassured him, saying, "*If you've already had a bath, you only need your feet washed; you're clean. But not everyone here is clean,*" alluding to Judas, who would betray him.

After washing their feet, Jesus put his robe back on and sat down. He asked, "*Do you understand what I've done for you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you're right—that's who I am. So, if I, your Lord and Teacher, washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I've set an example for you. No servant is greater than their master, and no messenger greater than the one who sent them.*"

Fast forward to the 1850s, when British artist Ford Madox Brown set out to capture this significant moment in one of his major paintings. He worked on it from 1851 to 1856, making various adjustments along the way. Brown painted the scene with a profound perspective, imparting an intense, dramatic feel. He portrayed Peter as an older, weary man, beaten down by the cares of life.

A stillness about Jesus feels timeless, almost akin to figures in late Medieval art.

Perhaps it is the medieval halo that the artist bestowed upon Him, or the stark white tablecloth framing Him, or even the way the floor seems to tilt upwards, contributing to the surreal atmosphere. It could be the sharp folds of His robe, the delicate outlines, or the care the artist took in slowly and thoughtfully painting every detail.

In the painting, Peter is depicted with his hands clasped in prayer, gazing at Jesus with a mix of disbelief and awe. As the Bible describes, Jesus, slender and humble, leans forward, gently washing Peter's feet with a towel tied around his waist.

The other disciples are gathered around, not merely surprised but profoundly saddened. Some appear distressed—one covers his face, while another bites his hand. It's as if they're coming to the realisation that everything is changing and that Jesus might not be the kind of king they anticipated.

Despite the tension, one disciple is calmly removing his sandals, prepared for his turn. Brown utilised bold, contrasting colours: deep browns for Peter, dark greens and reds in the background, transitioning to the bright white of the tablecloth, which directs the eye to Jesus in a lighter shade of green.

Traditional symbols are strewn throughout the scene, such as a pitcher under the table and a small purse—possibly alluding to Judas' betrayal. Judas, by the way, appears oddly indifferent compared to the others.

In the meantime, the other disciples are clearly struggling to understand what is happening. Some are rather dramatic—one has his hands on his head, while another is literally biting his hand. Others are more subdued, like the disciple in red behind Peter—perhaps John—who is merely observing and contemplating.

They are whispering to one another, presumably asking, "*What is going on?*"

Brown employs a raw, realistic style in his painting. The background is dark, nearly black, which allows the figures to stand out dramatically. Some faces are barely discernible in the shadows, enhancing the sombre mood. Interestingly, he used real people as models, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, another renowned Pre-Raphaelite, who appears as one of the apostles.

He was inspired by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's admiration for medieval styles and vividly brings this scene to life. Observe Peter—how his drapery is painted, the realistic detail of his wet feet dripping, his posture, and his expression.

At first glance, he appears to be scowling, perhaps even pouting, clearly uncomfortable with Jesus undertaking such a humble task. However, closer inspection reveals a softness around his eyes. His clasped hands, which initially seem resistant, begin to resemble a gesture of prayer. He may not fully comprehend, but he is making an effort. And despite his confusion, he allows Jesus to proceed because he trusts Him.

Brown wasn't merely concerned with religious scenes; he was also deeply passionate about social issues. He believed in showcasing the struggles of everyday individuals, particularly during the Industrial Revolution in England. His later works, such as 'Work' and 'The Last of England,' centre on the lives of labourers and emigrants confronting difficult circumstances. This perspective adds another dimension to '*Christ Washing Peter's Feet*'—it's not solely a religious painting but also a commentary on humility, service, and the dignity of all individuals, irrespective of their status.

Brown's distinctive approach demonstrates that even familiar stories can be presented in new, thought-provoking manners. His painting invites us to experience the emotions of that night—the confusion, the sorrow, and ultimately, the poignant lesson of humility and love.

We know how the story unfolds. We understand this is the Last Supper and are aware of the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. However, the disciples did not share that perspective. They were caught in the midst of it, feeling confused and overwhelmed.

Yet Jesus met them right there in their uncertainty. He did not grow frustrated with their confusion. Instead, He continued to serve, recognising that it would require time, experience, and the Holy Spirit to help them truly grasp what He was doing. Through this simple, humble act,

Then there's Judas. Look to the left—he's the one with the money bag on the table, in the process of removing his sandals. Jesus washed his feet, too.

What went through Judas's mind as Jesus gently cleaned the dirt from his feet? Was he ashamed? Annoyed? More determined than ever to betray Jesus because He wasn't the kind of Messiah Judas desired?

And what of Jesus? How did He feel lovingly serving the man who would soon betray Him?

There is much to reflect upon here in this single act...

WEEK 4: SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

How often do we rush through our days, ticking off to-do lists and moving from one obligation to the next, barely pausing to reflect? Amid the busyness of life, it's easy to overlook the subtle, sacred moments in which God reveals Himself. But what if we trained ourselves to notice Him more frequently?

One powerful way to do this is through a "*God Sightings*" journal. This simple practice can transform the way you see the world and deepen your awareness of God's presence in your daily life.

What Is a "God Sightings" Journal?

A "*God Sightings*" journal is exactly what it sounds like—a place where you write down moments where you notice God at work. These could be:

- An unexpected act of kindness from a stranger
- A beautiful sunset that stirs your soul
- A perfectly timed conversation with a friend
- A feeling of deep peace in the middle of a stressful situation
- A passage of Scripture that speaks directly to your heart

These moments, big or small, are glimpses of God's presence. By recording them, we train our hearts to look for Him more often.

Why Keep a "God Sightings" Journal?

It Shifts Your Perspective

Instead of going through the day on autopilot, you become more intentional about noticing how God moves. When you start looking for Him, you'll be amazed at how often He shows up.

It Strengthens Your Faith

Some days, life feels heavy. But when you look back at your journal and see evidence of God's faithfulness, it reminds you that He is always present—even when you don't feel it.

It Cultivates Gratitude

Seeing God at work naturally leads to thankfulness. Instead of focusing on what's going wrong, your heart will shift toward recognising God's goodness.

It Helps You Recognise Patterns

As you review your journal weekly or monthly, you may notice themes in how God speaks to you. Maybe He often reaches you through nature, people, or unexpected provision.

How to Start Your "God Sightings" Journal

1. Choose Your Format

You don't need an elaborate notebook—any journal will suffice. If you prefer digital notes, feel free to use your phone or an app like Evernote or Notepad. The essential point is consistency, not perfection.

2. Set a Simple Goal

Decide how often you want to record your "God sightings." Some people prefer to write daily, while others do a quick reflection at the end of each week. Even just one or two notes per day can make a big difference.

3. Ask Yourself These Questions

At the end of the day, take a few minutes to reflect:

- Where did I feel God's presence today?
- Did anything unexpected happen that seemed like more than a coincidence?
- Did someone's words or actions convey God's love?
- Was there ever a moment when I experienced peace, joy, or comfort in an unusual manner?

Jot down whatever stands out to you, even if it seems small. Over time, you'll begin to notice patterns.

4. Review and Reflect

At the end of each week, take a few minutes to read over your notes. Ask yourself:

- What themes am I seeing?
- How is God speaking to me?
- How can I be more aware of His presence in the coming days?

This reflection time allows the practice to sink deeper into your heart and become a natural part of your spiritual life.

Final Encouragement

The more you seek God, the more you will find Him. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 7:7, "*Seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.*"

A "God Sightings" journal is a simple but powerful way to train your heart to notice the divine in the ordinary. Over time, you'll develop a habit of seeing God's hand in the smallest details of your life. And as you do, you'll be reminded that He is always near, working, and loving you.

So why not start today? Open a notebook, jot down your first "God sighting," and begin the journey of noticing Him more each day. You just might be amazed at what you discover.

WEEK 4: WRITING PROMPTS

1. "When Love Feels Hard: Learning to Love Like Jesus"

Loving others is challenging, especially when they disappoint or hurt us. Write about a time when you struggled to love someone and how you found strength or perspective to love in a Christlike way, even in the difficulty.

2. "Living Out the Command to Love: Small Acts, Big Impact"

Jesus calls us to love in both grand gestures and small, everyday moments. How can we be intentional in our daily interactions to reflect His love? Write about practical ways to show love in seemingly insignificant moments.

3. **"Fear, Frustration, and Faith: Overcoming Barriers to Love"**

Fear, frustration, and anger often prevent us from loving others as Jesus asks. Reflect on how these barriers manifest in your own life and how you can lean into faith to overcome them.

4. **"The Radical Nature of Love in a Divided World"**

In a world marked by division, hatred, and self-interest, how is the command to love one another revolutionary? Explore the radical nature of love in today's context and how it serves as a testimony of our discipleship.

WEEK 4: SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Here are some engaging and thought-provoking discussion questions on John 13:31-35 for your small group:

1. Why do you think Jesus chose this moment, after Judas left, to give this new commandment to His disciples?**
2. Jesus commands us to love one another as He has loved us. What are some practical ways we can demonstrate this kind of love in our daily lives?
3. How do you think the disciples felt when they heard Jesus' commandment to love one another? How do you feel when you hear it?
4. In what ways does our love for one another serve as a witness to the world about our relationship with Jesus?
5. Jesus' love was sacrificial and unconditional. What challenges do we face in trying to love others in the same way?
6. Can you think of a time when someone showed you Christ-like love? How did it impact you?
7. How can we cultivate a culture of genuine love and care within our church community?
8. What role does forgiveness play in loving one another as Jesus loves us?
9. How can we ensure that our love for others is not just in words but also in actions?

I hope these questions help spark meaningful and engaging discussions in your group. If you need more, feel free to ask!

CASE STUDIES

On the following page we have three case studies exploring “Love one another as I have loved you” Split your group into three and have them discuss one of the studies each. Come back together to share your thoughts

Case Study 1: Supporting a Grieving Friend

Maria recently lost her mother and has been struggling with grief. Her church community rallies around her, offering emotional support, meals, and a listening ear. Members of the congregation take turns visiting Maria to ensure she doesn't feel alone and help her with daily tasks.

How can we continue to support and show love to those who are grieving long after the immediate loss?

Case Study 2: Assisting a Neighbour in Need

John, an elderly member of the community, is recovering from surgery and unable to tend to his garden. A group of Christians from his church decides to help him out. They mow his lawn, weed his flowerbeds, and ensure his garden looks beautiful. They also spend time with John, offering companionship and checking on his recovery.

In what other practical ways can we show love and care to our elderly neighbours?

Case Study 3: Welcoming a New Family

A refugee family has just moved into the neighborhood. The local church organizes a welcome event to help them settle in. Church members donate furniture, clothes, and other essentials. They also help the family navigate local services, enroll their children in school, and offer friendship and support as they adjust to their new life.

How can we ensure that we continue to support and build meaningful relationships with new families in our community over time?

I hope these case studies and questions inspire meaningful discussions in your small group. Let me know if you need any more!